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011107Z Aug 03

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 004862

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/01/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: RESIGNATIONS THROW OPPOSITION CHP FOR A LOOP

REF: ANKARA 4787

(U) Classified by Acting Political Counselor Nicholas S. Kass. Reason 1.5 (b,d)

1. (C) Two M.P.s from the main opposition, Establishment standard-bearer CHP resigned over the party's negative stance on the "re-integration" law -- designed to coax PKK/KADEK militants down from the mountains of n. Iraq -- which Parliament passed July 29 (reftel). Cemal Kaya and Nezir Nasiroglu -- from Southeastern provinces Agri and Batman, respectively -- explained publicly that they were "uneasy" with CHP's policies on Kurdish issues. Nasiroglu added that the party's stance "is not in line with the principles of democracy or with the promises I made to my people." Kaya, meanwhile, has already suggested that he is considering joining the ruling AK Party. (Note: AK recently acquired former independent deputy Sabahattin Ceveri from Sanliurfa, bringing the AK total number of seats in Parliament to 366 -- one shy of the two-thirds necessary to change the constitution. End note)

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Views From Both Sides of the Tracks...  
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2. (C) In a private conversation Aug. 1, CHP Hakkari M.P. Esat Canan told poloff that more resignations from his party could follow. He railed against CHP for failing to support the "re-integration" law, adding that he and some of his Southeastern colleagues are considering leading an internal opposition when Parliament reconvenes in October. But, he said, "if CHP cannot support democracy and social peace, then there may not be a reason for me to stay." He acknowledged that, as it stood, the law may not bring large numbers of PKK/KADEK militants down from the mountains, but that it represented an important step. He allowed that AK may not have been "strong enough" to overcome Establishment resistance to the more comprehensive law he would have preferred.

3. (C) CHP deputy and Foreign Affairs Committee member Hasim Oral offered Aug. 1 a strikingly different opinion of the resignations and "re-integration law." (Note: Oral hails from Denizli in the Aegean region -- long a bastion of the political Establishment/center-left. End note) Oral claimed that the resignations "will not weaken the party; they will strengthen it" by culling disgruntled deputies. He further argued that "none of his constituents wants an amnesty (sic) for the terrorists."

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...And From the Bench  
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4. (C) Constitutional Court Justice Hasim Kilic, a leading advocate of comprehensive reform, explained to us privately Aug. 1 that CHP has only itself to blame for its present problems. CHP is creating an image as an unprincipled and out-of-touch party by appearing to oppose, or only begrudgingly to accept after much hand-wringing, "everything" -- every pro-democracy reform that comes down the pike. He said CHP is behaving as if its sole job is simply to gainsay everything the AK Government does even when the Government is doing the right thing. This turns off the voters, he said.

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Party of Ataturk, "Freak of Nature" -- or Both?  
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5. (C) The resignations have sparked a round of negative press coverage against the "Party of Ataturk" by

Establishment journalists frustrated with CHP leader Deniz Baykal's perceived tactical fecklessness, lack of vision, and flaccid poll numbers. Columnist Erdal Safak, writing in the lead editorial in the August 1 edition of the mass daily "Sabah," described CHP as a "freak of nature" with "tragic" policies and prospects.

16. (C) Recently, Kemal Dervis, in whom so many CHP voters had invested their hopes, has been making noises about internal reform and hinting at eventually challenging Baykal for leadership of the party. To do so, however, would require Dervis to energize the party by reconsidering his often uncritical public support for Kemalist equities -- something he has so far been loath to do (septel). It is clear that until CHP can make major changes, its prospects making a run for it against the ruling AK in future elections will remain dim.

DEUTSCH